PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT DIGEST

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"SIX HATS ARE BETTER THAN ONE!"

Do you need a problem-solving process that promotes greater input from a greater number of people? If so . . . hold onto your hats!

A Summary of Six Thinking Hats (de Bono, 1999)

"Creative thinking is not a talent, it is a skill that can be learnt. It empowers people by adding strength to their natural abilities which improves teamwork, productivity and where appropriate profits." *Edward de Bono*

In the early 1980's, Dr. Edward de Bono invented the Six Thinking Hats method. The method is a framework for thinking with each of the six hats representing a different mode for thought. The goal of the method is to improve communication and decision-making within groups. The Six Thinking Hats method shows how each of us can become a better thinker through deliberate role-playing. "White hat thinking" explores facts, figures and information needs and gaps. "Red hat thinking" involves intuition, feelings, and emotion. "Black hat thinking" involves judgment and caution while "yellow hat thinking" is the logical positive. "Green hat thinking" is the hat of creativity, alternatives, changes, proposals, what is interesting and provocative. Finally, "blue hat thinking" is the overview or process control hat. It looks not at the subject itself but at the process for 'thinking' about the subject.

When the Six Thinking Hats process is used in groups, everybody wears the same hat at the same time. The image of a "hat" allows everyone to assume the same role or same perspective while looking at a situatioin. The method can promote greater input from a greater number of people. Everyone is able to contribute to the exploration without stepping on toes. In de Bono's words it "separates ego from performance".

CREATIVITY TO ACHIEVE A COMPETITIVE EDGE: A MESSAGE FROM MICHELLE WECKSLER

Gain a Competitive Edge Creatively

> ***Create: 1 :*** *to bring into existence* ***2 a :*** *to invest with a new form, office, or rank* ***b :*** *to produce or bring about by a course of action or behavior* ***3*** *: cause, occasion* ***4 a*** *: to produce through imaginative skill* ***b :*** *design intransitive senses* ***:*** *to make or bring into existence something new (Merriam-Webster)*

Are you a creative person? Many of us will quickly answer "no" to the question, reserving our definition of "creative person" to those whose works appear in museums or in books. One of the main things that hinders creative thinking is our belief that we are

not creative. The truth is that everyone has the potential to be creative and once we each adopt this belief about ourselves we will become interested in seeking out the skills we need to express our creativity.

Creativity, however, does not just "happen." In fact, just because a person has the ability to be creative, does not necessarily mean that the person will be! Our creativity is something that we need to develop and that we need to be motivated to use. Creative ability can be learned, improved upon, and increased over time. The purpose of learning skills for developing creativity is to enable us to generate and implement new ideas.

Creativity provides you with a competitive edge in the workplace and can create great benefits in your personal life. Some of the benefits of creativity include: increased ability to solve problems, expanded view of situations, opening up of new experiences and opportunities, increased willingness to take chances, assisting in finding the *best*, as opposed to the *easiest*, solutions, and keeping you from "hitting a wall" with respect to problem-solving.

What can you do to improve your creativity? Here are just a few steps you can take:

- Attend a workshop on creativity and put the ideas into practice
- Read books on creative thinking and use the techniques you learn
- Write down your thoughts and ideas as soon as you get them
- Relax or distract yourself from the issue you are dealing with to give your mind time to rest and digest information. Some of our best ideas can come to us in the shower or when we are sitting under a tree!
- Be open to new input. Try something new, preferably something well away from your normal routine or area of comfort. This keeps your brain busy with new information and may even spark a new interest for you.
- If you are a manager, recognize that employees are more creative in structures that are less hierarchical, more democratic, and that encourage the free flow of ideas

If creativity is something you would like to improve upon or develop, be sure to set measurable goals for yourself in order to ensure success. An example of a specific goal might be "to come up with an original solution for issue "X" within 2 weeks." You will also want to set up criteria to assess whether or not you have reached your goal. For example, your criteria to judge whether you reached your goal of coming up with an original solution might be that the idea is useful and can be implemented within an appropriate amount of time.

While you are on your quest to expand your creativity, be sure to surround yourself with individuals who encourage and support your creative goals. You may even want to adopt a creative genius. Find someone, past or present, whom you feel exemplifies the creativity you wish to develop. Read about this person and learn how they came to develop their own creativity. Finally, be sure to reward yourself for your creativity. Creativity is increased by acknowledging that it exists and by *nurturing* it.

WHEN WEIRD THINKING IS GOOD!

The evidence is in and it demonstrates that it is impossible to generate a few good ideas without generating a lot of bad ideas. The only problem is that you never know which ideas will succeed and which will fail. The Rand Group and ADR Group International believe in generating enough ideas so that you can fail faster and find success! This article contains 5 ½ weird ideas to generate good ideas. Find out more . . .

http://www.fastcompany.com/online/54/sutton.html

"EYES WIDE SHUT" – NOT JUST A MOVIE, BUT A MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE

Eyes Wide Shut? – A Problem Solving Technique You Want to Avoid

How many times have you seen a product or a service and known it was an idea you could have developed? In fact, the idea was sitting there, right under your nose, but something prevented you from seeing it. Were your eyes wide shut! Bringing fresh input into your daily business life is one way to spark creativity and open your eyes. This article shares some ideas for how to constantly expose yourself to fresh ideas. Find out more. . .

http://www.entrepreneur.com/mag/article/0,1539,309468,00.html

NEW IDEAS – NEW APPROACHES

Hiring Deviants – It May Work Better Than You Think!

Interested in hiring a deviant in order to build a competitive edge? Maybe you would like to explore new terrain. CIO Magazine provides a review of a number of books that may spark your interest. Find out more . . .

http://www.cio.com/archive/010103/tl_shelf.html

A CHALLENGE TO YOU

ADR Group International, LLC and The Rand Group challenge you to challenge your assumptions! Not only does making assumptions make an . . . well, you know the saying . . . making assumptions also limits your ability to generate ideas and solve problems. Sometimes, the best way to approach a situation is to be willing to leave your assumptions behind and see where the journey takes you. The following technique will show you how.

Challenging Assumptions

To generate ideas consider challenging your assumptions. The first step is to look at the issue you are examining and then to identify and list all of the assumptions inherent in the issue. Once you have created a list, explore what would happen if you drop each of the assumptions individually or in combination. For example, assume that you work in the Customer Service department for a company that sells televisions. At your company, when customers purchase televisions they are encouraged to purchase a service agreement for an annual cost of $30. The revenue from the service contracts funds the repair department.

What are some of the assumptions in the above example?

1. Customers purchase service agreements
2. Customers pay $30 for service agreements
3. Service agreements are a product and, therefore, are to be sold
4. Our repair department provides valuable, quality and timely service

Now explore what happens if each assumption is dropped. What happens if service agreements are free? Maybe the television price could be increased and the service given to customers at no cost, creating the impression of free service. What if our company did not offer a service contract? What if service agreements weren't sold? Suppose customers could earn service contracts by receiving points for each product they purchased? What if we did not have a repair department? Maybe repair vendors would pay for the opportunity to service our products in return for our company advertising them as an authorized servicing agent. How can you Challenge Assumptions in your work?